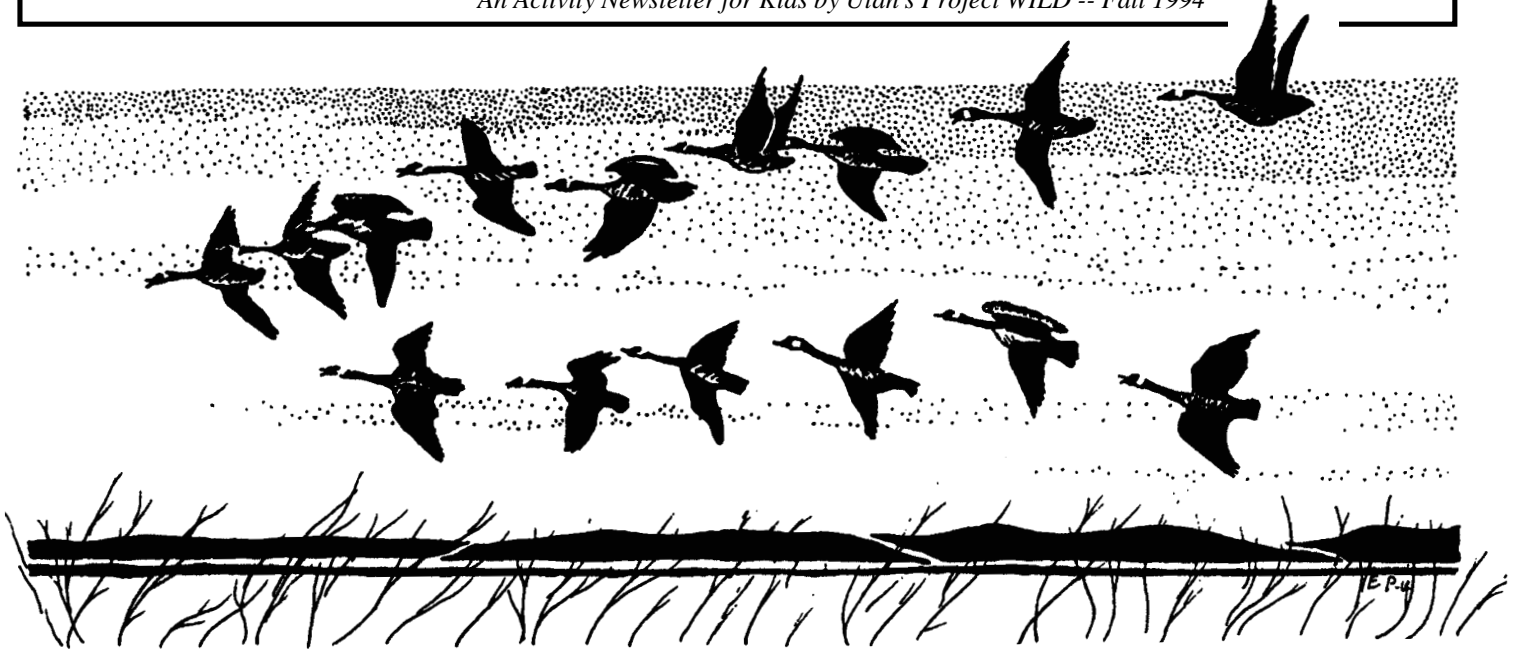


Nature's Call

An Activity Newsletter for Kids by Utah's Project WILD -- Fall 1994



Plant Your Yard With Birds!

Many people beautify their yards with flowers to add color, variety and excitement. Imagine being able to fill your yard with brightly colored objects of all sizes and shapes whose patterns are always changing. Now, imagine that these beautiful objects can also fly and sing. Impossible? But, it's not... these beauties are birds! How can you get them to visit your yard year-round, even during the winter months? That's right — provide them with **Habitat!** Give them plenty of food, water, shelter and space!

Since different kinds of birds like different kinds of foods, you'll want to give them a choice. Chickadees, finches and juncos like seeds, especially small black sunflower seeds or white proso millet. Insect eaters, such as woodpeckers and nuthatches, like fat. In the winter, peanut butter provides both fat and protein. Other birds, like cedar waxwings, prefer berries and other fruits.

Bushes will provide shelter — a good place to hide from predators like cats and sometimes hawks! Make sure your feathered friends stick around after the snow melts by providing plenty of sites for nesting. Different kinds of birds in the same area will choose different kinds of materials for building their nests. Usually, nests have some stiff material used for support, then some finer material used for "modeling," and then the finest, softest material used for the lining. Be sure to provide a variety of plants for nest building. Add water and stand back! You'll have created an ideal bird sanctuary!!

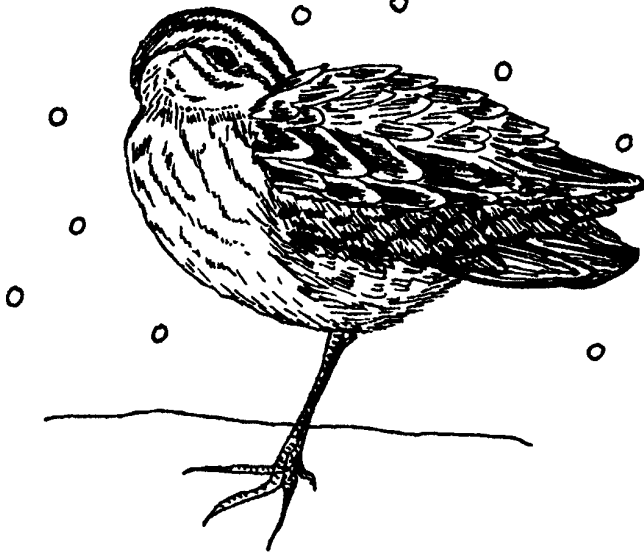
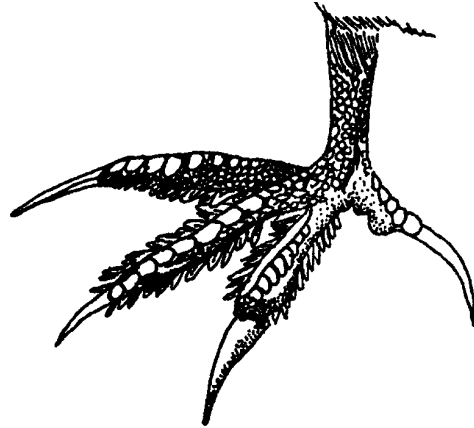
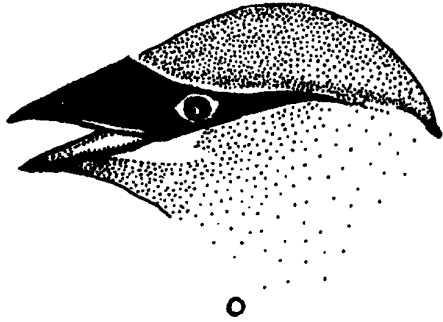
A Paradise on Paper

On a separate piece of paper, draw a yard that would provide plenty of places for different kinds of birds to feed, hide, bathe, drink and nest. Then, draw in the birds! Now, look at your own backyard, front yard or school yard! Can you design it so birds will want to visit there?

Winter Window Watching

Many birds in Utah can be watched easily at feeding stations during the winter. If you place feeders in different places in your yard, you'll attract many different kinds of birds. Try putting food at different levels — on the ground, on a tabletop, hanging from a tree and attached to a tree trunk.

The birds you see may have special adaptations which allow them to survive the cold and snow. Below are some examples of adaptations which you might observe. **Match the picture of the adaptation with the advantage it provides the birds by drawing connecting lines.**



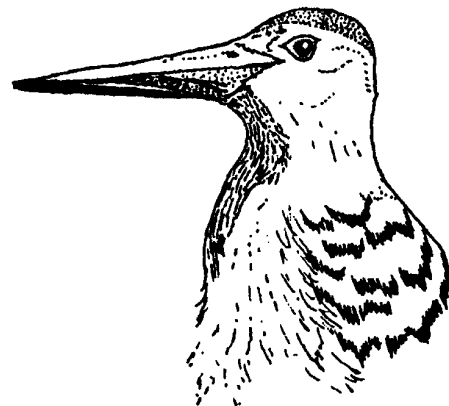
This adaptation allows the bird to warm one leg.

This adaptation allows some birds to crush frozen berries.

This adaptation allows some birds to drill under bark to find egg cases and hibernating insects.

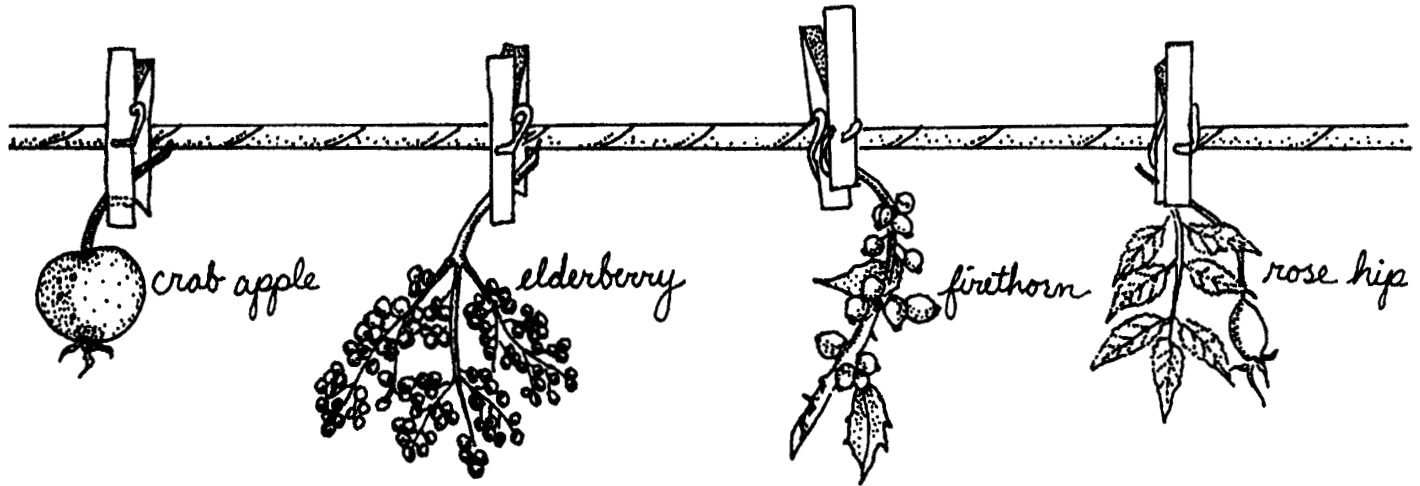
This adaptation allows birds to walk on top of the snow.

This adaptation increases “coat” thickness to provide better insulation from the cold.



Find pictures of birds which have these or other winter adaptations.

Bird Your Yard With Plants!



Berry Birds

This investigation is designed to be conducted this fall so you can figure out which kinds of plants the birds in your neighborhood like best! Then, put your findings to use! As you plan to plant your yard with birds, make sure you leave room for these plants!

Which birds eat berries? What kinds do they like best? Find out by doing this simple experiment. Scout around your neighborhood. Collect as many different kinds of berries and other fruits as you can find (remember to ask permission if they are in a neighbor's yard). Hang the fruits and berries from a clothesline or string in a place where feeding can be easily observed. Hang them high enough to be out of reach of other animals which may eat them, or they may be gone by morning! Sometimes, the first food a bird chooses is the most attractive from a distance, but another food may be preferred once the bird is up close. Try to get some idea of the fraction of fruits and berries eaten by comparing the amount (weight or number) of food before and after a day of feeding. Early morning and late afternoon are the best feeding times, so try to include those times in your observations.

**Caution: Do not taste any fruits or berries unless you know they are edible for people!*

A Bird Buffet

On a separate piece of paper, draw your clothesline of berries and fruits. If you know their names, label each one. Now draw the birds you see feeding there. What colors do you see on their feathers? What do their beaks look like? Using binoculars will help you get a closer look.

This activity was adapted from Botany for All Ages by Jorie Hunken, The Globe Pequot Press, 1989.

Recycling is for the Birds!

How can you feed the birds and recycle? You can make your own bird feeder from an empty, plastic bottle. Detergent bottles work well because they are strong. Here's how you do it:

1. Find an empty detergent bottle and rinse it out until it is very clean.
2. Find a mustard jar lid. Trace the outline of the mustard jar lid onto both sides of the plastic jug about four inches from the bottom of the jug.
3. Now comes the tricky part. Ask an adult to help you cut out the circles.
4. To make a perch, find a sturdy stick or dowel. Use a nail or paper punch to punch a hole about two inches below the circle. Insert the stick completely through the bottle so that it comes out both sides.
5. To hang your bird feeder, cut off the lower part of a coat hanger. Bend the hanger wires to resemble a stirrup. Poke two nail holes, opposite each other, in the neck of the bottle. Push the "stirrup" ends of the hanger through the nail holes.
6. Now make some very small drain holes in the bottom of the jug so the rain water can drain out. Make sure the holes are not too big because the bird seed might fall out .
7. Fill your new feeder with bird seed and hang it in your backyard. If you are going to hang it higher than your head you will need the help of an adult.
8. Give the birds a few days to find this new "supermarket." It won't be long before you discover that recycling is for the birds! .

